DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 127 750 EC 090 981

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TITLE Business and Industry: Partners in Education of Gifted and Talented.
PUB DATE Apr 76
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention, The Council for Exceptional Children (54th, Chicago, Illinois, April 4-9, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Organizations; *Community Resources; *Cooperative Programs; Educational Methods; Educational Objectives; *Educational Programs; Enrichment; Exceptional Child Education; *Gifted; House Plan; Interagency Cooperation; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Program Descriptions; *School Community Relationship; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS *New Jersey (Newark)

ABSTRACT

In 1969 the Newark, New Jersey, Board of Education began the School Within A School Program for gifted and talented inner-city high school students. The program, offering an eleven-month school year plus five major subjects, uses the resources of business and industry to prepare students for a college education. An advisory board consisting of educators from high schools and colleges as well as business personnel, serves as a resource and advisory board. Corporate executives meet with teachers and students to discuss the problems facing inner-city residents; and the students visit the executives, gaining insight into the corporate world. Some additional goals of the program are raising funds for operational costs of the program and college scholarships, and supporting specialized college programs for high school students. (IM)

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Business and Industry: Partners in Education of Gifted and Talented

Donald N. Treloar

Remarks Delivered Before The Council for Exceptional Children's International Convention
Chicago - April 6, 1976

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Everyone knows that business is anti-intellectual, corporations skim the cream off the top (teachers as well as students), they criticize the educators, offer damn little support (and then only for selfish reasons), and, in general, blame the school system for all the inadequacies of our urbanized society.

On the other side of the coin, everyone knows that school administrators can't administer, and teachers can't teach. After all, look at the number of dropouts, examine the costs borne by business to retrain graduates, and read the newspaper headlines about the low achievement on the college entrance examinations.

Given these two ingrained diametrically opposite points of view, is it possible for a marriage -- a mixed marriage at the very best -- to succeed? We are making every effort to prove that it can in Newark, New Jersey. In reality, business and industry and the education community suffer an interdependency which results in a strong common purpose. This singularity of purpose is especially vital in the education of the gifted and talented.

In 1969 the Newark Board of Education, despite its own misgivings, took a chance on business . . . and business responded, despite its own misgivings. This was the beginning of Prudential's involvement with School Within A School -- a program for gifted and talented youth in Newark. The school's

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goal was to prepare inner-city students for the rigorous challenges of a college education. It offered an eleven-month school year plus five major subjects. Its director, Seymour Spiegel, had the good sense not to be inhibited by any personal biases about business, nor did he worry about the hang-ups that he knew business might have. He formed an advisory board which consisted of educators from high schools and colleges, and business people, too.

The members of the advisory board were under no illusions as to their roles. This was not a Board of Trustees, it was merely an advisory committee. Its purpose was clearly defined by Mr. Spiegel. The committee was to assist him and the program in its development. Whenever Mr. Spiegel had any problems, needed some type of support or just wanted a sounding board, he would share these concerns with the advisory committee. The advisory committee, on the other hand, knew that whatever help was offered, the final decision was always Mr. Spiegel's. The committee could offer advice, and usually, not always, it was followed. In essence, though, the committee was used primarily as a resource board.

We, in the business world feel this experience has been an excellent arrangement. As far as we're concerned, School Within A School has proven to be a wonderful, worthwhile program, and has been rewarding for us to be a part of it. It's a successful program because of the imagination, hard work and leadership which the director of the school has demonstrated. Its success

was due also to business being able to offer the assistance being sought. We were, in fact, able to respond to most of the requests -- and we made a few suggestions of our own which Mr. Spiegel accepted and used.

As I said, the committee consists of representatives from business and industry, high school and college. The college and high school personnel pool their talents to develop close curricular articulation and provide appropriate college level courses for these youngsters. The professors then ask the business personnel to help with resources and specific areas of expertise.

To offer you some examples: In the early stages of the program, Mr. Spiegel asked the Prudential representative if our actuaries could offer some assistance in the math curriculum. When approached, our actuaries responded by developing a course in probability and statistics which they taught to the SWAS students during the month of July -- the 11th month of their program. This course is now an integral curriculum offering to SWAS students. The students who express an interest in a career in math are given the opportunity to study "actuarial" math at the Prudential headquarters. They are given "employee" badges and have many company benefits including free lunches, recreation rooms and library privileges. The course requires a SWAS math teacher and an actuary to work together to bring about the required results. The concept includes a four week course with four full days per week at the Pru and the fifth day on a site visitation to

various organizations that are math oriented. Following the month long activity, the course is fully evaluated by SWAS. It is also evaluated by Prudential. Both groups get together to discuss problems and make recommendations for improvement. This course is a perfect example of how business and education can cooperate for the development of youngsters.

Like any other group, this is not without problems. However, the overriding concern has always been the welfare and education of the students. Neither of these groups has ever lost sight of this fact. Thus, each year there is an evaluation, perhaps some finger pointing; but, nonetheless, a very cooperative effort to seek and correct any problems and plan for the following year's course, if such a course is desired. Needless to say, we have not skipped a year since the program's inception, and plans are in the offing for July, 1976.

There are other examples in which this advisory committee has worked together responding to the needs expressed by Mr. Spiegel. As far as I'm concerned, it's not what Prudential has done for SWAS as much as what individual members of the advisory committee have done. I'm one of the members, and I'm fortunate because I work for Prudential, which is a large company and has expertise in many fields. On the other hand, many of the business persons on the committee were equally successful in obtaining support from their companies. As SWAS grew, it became necessary for some type of identification. When Mr. Spiegel brought this to the attention of the advisory committee, the representative from the Port Authority of New Jersey

and New York suggested his organization would develop a logo with the input of students who are interested in public relations and graphic arts. Thus the SWAS logo was developed. This was followed by the publication of a students' newsletter. The school's journalism club, its teacher and the Prudential's art department combined talents to develop a periodic newsletter which is published for the student body, faculty, advisory committee and supporters. While it is published by Prudential and other corporations on a rotating basis, the efforts are clearly the students' with advice offered by Pru artists.

Other business involvements are worthwhile mentioning. The Bell System is involved in many educational programs in our community. Bell Labs' employees conduct science experiments tied into the science curriculum at the local schools. New Jersey Bell Telephone employees develop supplemental curriculum with teachers which show practical application to the material being learned. Many corporations have established Explorer Posts in which career employees work with students describing the application of learning experiences. Of course, business too has gained from this cooperation.

Mr. Spiegel has provided the business community a site for sensitivity workshops for corporate executives. These executives meet with teachers and students to learn about the problems facing inner-city residents. The students are able to visit the executives in the corporate world to gain some insight into their environment. In this relationship, the corporate world gains a considerable amount of understanding from the educational sector.

There have been many other ways in which business people and educators have cooperated in this grand experiment. Rasing funds for operational costs and scholarships are a routine assignment for this committee. Securing corporate support for specialized college programs for high school students has been an ongoing operation also. Programs sponsored by Exxon, Mobil and others have resulted in SWAS students and teachers being involved in special pre-engineering courses taught at local colleges. Courses in college level physics, calculus and pre-flight aero-space training sponsored by corporations have been an ongoing part of the SWAS curriculum.

What is basic to this whole program is that business and educators put aside their differences and pre-conceived notions about each other and work together as a team. The team has one overriding goal -- the best education and development of the student. To this end all is directed!

I might add, that SWAS is not Prudential's only involvement. We have been associated in many other programs in the Newark school system. Again, it is to highlight programs that may have some adaptation to your own particular needs. Some of our other involvements are:

- Project SEED -- A socratic method program which has mathematicians teaching algebra and higher math to inner-city youngsters in grade five. Our actuaries are released on company time to undergo training and then released to teach three classes per week.

- WORK STUDY -- Many corporations have this type of programs with their local high schools. Its purpose is to prepare students for entry level jobs in the work force. We have such programs with a number of the local

schools, but we also develop special programs for the SWAS student who we know will be going on to college. It provides an opportunity for practical application of their studies. During the summer we invite some students to participate in our computer instruction course for programmers.

- CAREER PROGRAMS -- Company employees have developed programs relating to their own particular careers. They share this information with student groups and work together in specific projects. The SWAS students and a group of employees from our Sales Promotion Department worked together to develop a communications brochure. This brochure, which described what SWAS meant to the students, was distributed to all incoming freshmen and their parents.

To recapitulate, we are involved in these as well as many other programs. We are a big organization and we should be involved in as many programs as possible. My purpose in telling you this is to urge school administrators and teachers to seek supplemental support from business. Business does not want to tell you how to run your business, it merely wants evidence that you will, in fact, implement what it is you are seeking. It would also want to know if the program is a success or a failure. In other words, how do you intend to evaluate the end result for which you are seeking support? And it doesn't have to require results in three months, either -- SWAS began in 1969, its purpose was to prepare the inner city student for the rigorous challenges of a college education. Success in this particular case is a college diploma. Thus, success for SWAS will not be known until 1977, when the first class of SWAS will be degree candidates. That is a long term commitment.

Thus, I encourage and urge you. Develop programs which require supplemental support from business. You might be surprised to find that not only will business listen, but also business will act!